

no 55

20 Feb.

An

Essay

on the

Bilious Remitting Fever.

as it appeared (in 1803).

in

Petersburg Virginia

"Truth requires no ornament;

What she borrows from the pencil is deformity."

John Smith
of the
County of ...
State of ...
do hereby certify
that

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St. John's

The report which I have just
received from the committee
concerning the state of the
affairs of the Society is very
satisfactory. It is the result of the
labors of the Society for the
past year. The committee have
been very diligent in their
work, and have done much
good. They have been very
successful in their efforts to
bring about a more general
knowledge of the Gospel, and
to secure the salvation of
many souls. They have also
been very successful in their
efforts to secure the support
of the community, and to
secure the cooperation of the
people in their work.

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Introduction.

The subject which I have selected for an Essay to be submitted to your consideration, on becoming a candidate for medical honours, is an account of the Bilious Remitting fever, as it appeared in the Town of Petersburg and vicinity, Nov^r during the fall of 1813. Having all theoretical discussions, and simply detailing facts, as they came under my own observation having seen a number labouring under the disease. But those whom I saw being slaves and a few of the lower class of society, it is probable they were not generally so severely afflicted as those who partake freely of luxuries; but even among them it was often of a most distressing nature, and when I reflect upon the importance of the

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task in which I am about to engage I shrink with diffidence from it, and would most willingly engage in one less so, but what subject which has any allusion to the healing art that is not of the utmost importance to mankind? Were I to enter into a minute description of the disease, I should be necessarily compelled to relate several cases which would take up much of your time to no purpose; I shall therefore endeavour to make amends for the imperfections of this my first medical Essay, by consuming as little of your time as possible, and shall only give a general account of the symptoms and mode of treatment.

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Symptoms.

The symptoms of approaching indisposition were inaction, yawning, sighing, loss of appetite often an unquenchable thirst, with constipation of the bowels, in some instances altho' the appetite was good, the persons would complain of a want of taste in the articles they eat, Thus the symptoms would progress untill a cold chill came on accompanied with nausea, and sickness at stomach which acids often terminate in a vomiting of bilious matter, and the patient feeling only debilitated, which he attributes to the great evacuation; resumes his former occupations with the hopes of returning health, but these hopes he finds abortive by the return of another paroxysm which did not observe a regular period, but generally on the second day, it appeared with redoubled violence, being likewise ushered in with a chill and of longer duration than the first;

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The pulse became small irregular and in some cases scarcely perceptible; a sense of weight about the chest, respiration much impeded, great thirst, irritability of temper and often a discharge of bile downwards, which left the bowels in a constipated state. The duration of the chill was not uniform lasting sometimes not more than ten minutes, and at others thirty which was the longest I saw. The chill gradually abating a fever gradually advances the pulse now becomes fuller and stronger, a pain in the head, back and loins follows, the eyes become weak and in some instances, though rarely inflamed the throat increases, intense heat pervades the whole body, with injection of spirits; after some time there abate the skin gradually & partially becomes moist. The pulse more regular the breathing less impeded the patient falls into a short but not refreshing slumber from which he awakes much

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debilitated and remains languid little disposed to take any nourishment but complains of continual thirst bitterness in the mouth, with a clammy sensation, the tongue covered with a white crust generally, but in some few instances little arising from water. Al appearances. Added to those they would complain of either or severe pain in the head, and back, or insupportable sickness at the stomach; those complaining of the one scarcely ever complaining of the other.

Thus the disease advanced which if not checked either put ~~an~~ an end to the unfortunate sufferer, or protracted those sufferings to a great length.

These are the principal symptoms which accompanied the disease: all of which as may be supposed did not occur in any one case, but the principal part were present in nearly all, unless when altered in the former state. Generally the eruptions were distinctly marked but occasionally indistinctly as to assume the continued form.

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Treatment

If attacked in its forming state with a dose of Glauber salts and tartar emetic given in succession until it produced vomiting and catharsis the disease was often stopped; but if the disease has made any progress the exhibition of an emetic was attended with ill consequences the vomiting continuing for some time which caused the secretions to be left distinctly marked and so exhausted the patient as to terminate in unfavourable termination. But unfortunately the disease was not often thus early attacked the patient not being sensible of the premonitory symptoms, or not regarding them as an indication attacked in its forming state it would not always yield. In those cases which it had been attacked but did not yield it was only necessary to keep the secretions open and preserve in the use of tonics

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with proper attention to Diet and exercise. If it had not been noticed until the symptoms became more alarming, and inflammatory action being present which was generally the case it was unsafe to take $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ of blood frequently not more than one bleeding was necessary, but occasionally two were requisite which was as often as the pulse would bear; the effects of bleeding were not always the same, it sometimes producing no evident good; and at others it had a good effect was evident, the patient falling into a gentle slumber soon after the operation. But towards the end of autumn the least quantity of blood could not be drawn with impunity, it prostrating the system to an alarming degree.

Purgatives were invaluable; in the common treatment of the disease, the lungs being generally constipated, a dose of Calomel & Scurp was

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given, the smelter not being sufficient to open the
bowels nor indeed would a ~~small~~ moderate dose of
Calomel & Jalap succeed, it required a large dose aided
by an emema. Such was the temporary effects
of purgatives that after their operation the
patients countenance as well as expressions indicat-
ed an inclination of pain and they would fall
into a gentle shiver accompanied with a drop
feverish. During the paroxysm great advantage
was derived from placing each hand in a
basin of cool water and cloths wetted and ap-
plied to the head and feet being cautions not to
allow them to remain a sufficient length of
time to become unreasonably cold Great advantage
was likewise obtained from the free use of ice,
allowing the patient to eat it ad libitum, it
not only allayed the heat of the lower intestines
but the stomach and in cases of constipation prop-

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and it for relaxing tonics. Diaphoretics particularly in cases where the remissions were indistinctly marked were highly serviceable they had the effect of making them more distinctly, avoiding those excitation in the inflammatory stage.

Blisters even at an early period were attended with advantage in those cases in which I used them (which were but few) not having recourse to them until it was too late to give them a fair trial and I am the benefit I derived from them in those few cases in which I applied them early I regret much not having recourse to them sooner than I did. ~~Applying~~ Cupping when the pain in the head was severe was likewise used. As a substitute for the common Diluent drinks I used molasses and water with a little acid which assisted in keeping the bowels open.

The system being prepared for tonics and

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Peruvian bark expensive I determined from the
high recommendation of Dr. Barlow to try the
Cannes Florida and I am happy in saying it
met my most sanguine expectations indeed I
~~am~~ surprised to think if it were not so common
throughout the U. States and therefore so easily
obtained the dogwood would be preferred by many
to the Peruvian bark be this as it may I believe
I should not have obtained more benefit from
its use than I did from the dogwood. An objec-
tion might be urged against it, that it requires
much larger doses than the P. Bark. this objec-
tion would be of considerable weight were we
compelled to use it in substance, but by deco-
ction we obtain an elegant and not a very
nauseous preparation which is not so apt to
be rejected by the stomach as the decoction of
the P. Bark. I used ~~it~~ with as much caution

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as I would have used the Bark not giving it during the fever the patient generally taking a wine glass full every X or XV minutes; in no case was there a relapse but this was guarded against by attention to Diet & Exercise, and continuing in the use of the decoction for several days during the convalescent state, during which time the bowels were kept open which was effected by occasionally giving a mild cathartic, but often the decoction had the effect of purging, and in one or two instances it purged so much that I thought proper to check it by occasional doses of Laudanum; during this stage great attention was paid to exercise, the patient never exposed himself after sun down, but was allowed as much exercise as he could bear without fatigue, the appetite was not indulged, in things of an indigestible nature, but frequ-

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ently and sparingly satisfying it. under this
treatment the recoveries were generally rapid, and
is no case do I recollect of a person having a
second attack.

[Faint, illegible handwriting in cursive script, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.]

[Faint, illegible handwriting in cursive script, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.]